**Telecom Facilities in Rural Areas of Kerala**

3146. SHRI THENNALA G. BALAKRISHNA PILLAI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the scheme for providing telecom facilities in the rural areas of Kerala;

(b) the total number of villages in Kerala where wireless and local loop services have been provided;

(c) the number of villages where no telecom facilities exist; and

(d) the steps taken to provide telecom facilities in those villages?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Following steps are being taken for providing and improving the telecome facilities in the rural areas of Kerala:

(i) Provision of support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for Operation and Maintenance of existing Village Public Telephones (VPTs), provision of additional Rural Community Phones (RCPs) in villages with population exceeding 2000.

(ii) Provision of telephone on demand with support from Universal Service Obligation (USO) Fund in 15 commercially unviable SDCAs out of total 58 SDCAs in Kerala by January, 2006. This will cover a significant part of the rural areas of Kerala.

(iii) Large scale deployment of Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) system including provision of at least one Base Transceiving Station (BTS) in each Short Distance Charging Area (SDCA).

(iv) Opening of new exchanges at places which have a minimum demand of 150 within 5 kms radius of the proposed exchange site.

(b) to (d) All the 1,468 villages of Kerala have already been provided with telephone facility in the form of Village Public Telephone (VPTs) Out of these 3 villages are covered with Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) technology.